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Home Freezing of Cooked and Prepared Foods

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Preparing food ahead of time and freezing it can save time, energy and money. Frozen cooked foods also add variety to your menu, offer quick meals for unexpected company and provide nutritious choices for busy days.

When you are preparing a main dish, it takes only a little more effort and time to make enough for several meals. You can freeze all of the prepared food in meal size packages, or serve part of the food immediately and freeze the rest.

It is more economical to make your own supply of prepared dishes than to purchase commercially prepared foods.

Consider freezing:

- Leftovers that cannot be used immediately.
- Foods that ordinarily take a long time to prepare.
- Seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Foods you can prepare in quantity.
- Foods that still taste good after a reasonable storage time.

Hints for Freezing

Select only fresh, high quality ingredients because freezing does not improve the quality of food.

Slightly undercook prepared foods. They will finish cooking when reheated.

Cool foods quickly before packaging. Place the pan of food in a large pan of ice water, crushed ice or cubes. Stirring will help cool the food faster. Use a fan to cool foods that cannot be stirred.

Freeze food promptly as soon as it is cooled to room temperature.

Put no more unfrozen food in the freezer than will freeze within 24 hours. Usually this is 2 or 3 pounds per cubic foot of freezer capacity. Stack the food after it is frozen.

Plan to use frozen prepared foods within a short time. Keep using foods from the freezer and replenish with fresh stock. This makes greater use of freezer space, lowers the cost per pound of food stores, and keeps your store of food fresh.

The temperature of the freezer should not go above 0°F. Fluctuating temperatures and temperatures that are not low enough cause loss of quality.

Foods that do not freeze well include mayonnaise, cream puddings and fillings, custard, gelatin salads, cheese, the whites of hard cooked eggs and uncooked egg yolks.

Hints for Packaging

Use freezer containers or wrappings of moisture/vapor-resistant material.

Pack food compactly into the container to reduce the amount of air in the package. Allow head room for expansion as food freezes.

In quart containers, the food may be separated into two or three layers by a double thickness of water resistant wrapping material.

Quart containers hold four to six servings; pints, two to three.

Choose containers by the number of servings you will want to serve.

Use only containers with wide top openings. Food can then be removed without thawing.

Freeze the prepared foods in your favorite casserole dish. The food can be removed after freezing, wrapped and returned to the freezer for storage.

For microwave reheating, use plastic wrap for wrapping small amounts of quick breads or breads. Casseroles should be approved for microwave use.

Label and date all packages, and keep an inventory of all frozen food.

Freezing Recommendations for Commonly Prepared Foods

<i>Food</i>	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Serving</i>	<i>Storage Time</i>
COMBINATION DISHES	(Foods should be undercooked)		
Baked beans and other bean dishes	After cooking, cool these dishes by setting pan or oven-freezer tempered baking dish in a shallow	Thaw and use only the serving portions you need. Reheat at medium	2-4 months 3

Rice or spaghetti dishes Lasagna Chow mein Soups Stuffed peppers or eggplants Meat pies	pan of water or crushed ice. Stir occasionally. Freeze promptly when cool. Wrap package compactly to eliminate air space. Meat pies need not be baked. Top crust may be sufficient.	temperature as appropriate--on top of the stove, use heavy sauce pan or double boiler; in oven at 350°F (400°F for meat pies).	months
MEAT, POULTRY, FISH			
Meat loaf Meat balls Meat sauce Veal birds Roasts Cubed or chunky meat Ham Turkey Chicken Fish	Prepare as usual, freeze raw or cook to rare stage before freezing. Meat balls can be covered with sauce. Do not stuff poultry. Remove ham bone after baking to save freezer space. Package in appropriate sized containers for later use.	Reheat in skillet or 350°F oven. No need to thaw. Cooking time will be 10-20 minutes per pound.	1-3 months
POTATOES			
Mashed	Store leftovers in a straight sided container. Or add a beaten egg and shape into patties. Shape and store with double layer of paper between them.	Thaw just enough to slip potatoes into top of double boiler. Dip patties in flour and brown in fat at low heat.	2-4 weeks
Stuffed (baked)	Cut freshly baked potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out potato, leaving skin unbroken. Mash scooped out potato and season. Pile into shells. Cool and wrap.	Remove from package or wrap. Place on baking sheet. Reheat at 325-350°F until piping hot. Garnish; add cheese if desired.	1 month
French Fries	Use a high starch content potato for frying (Idaho or similar type). Fry in hot fat until a light brown.	Spread on cookie sheet and place in 400°F oven until thawed and crisp.	1-2 months
Sweet Potatoes	Dip boiled potatoes in lemon juice or package with cooking water around them. Freeze candied or mashed potatoes in a casserole. Leave skin on baked potatoes.	Reheat in 325-350°F oven until hot throughout.	3 months
COMPARTMENT PLATES OR TRAYS			
1. Roast beef, corn and spinach 2. Swiss steak, french fried potatoes	Food packaged together should be those which retain quality for about the same period of time, and require same heating time. Most vegetables need only blanching before freezing meat and vegetables. Sauces may be	Reheat with tray or plate covered, except for crispy foods which should be uncovered.	1 month

3. Sliced turkey, dressing or stuffed baked potato and mixed vegetables	added!		
4. Ham slice, sweet potato and broccoli			
QUICK BREADS			
Biscuits Muffins Coffee cake Fruit bread Doughnuts Waffles Pancakes	Prepare as usual, cool. Freeze in pan and cover tightly. May be packaged in aluminum foil for reheating. Waffles and pancakes may be separated in layers in plastic containers.	Heat in pan or foil in 325-350°F oven until hot. Waffles and pancakes may be heated from frozen stage in the toaster until hot and crispy.	1-2 months
YEAST BREADS			
Rolls Sweet rolls Loaf of bread Coffee cake	Dough may be made, shaped, placed in pans and frozen; or baked before freezing. Cover uncooked bread tightly and freeze before product has raised. For baked bread, cool, then cover pan tightly or place product in foil.	For unbaked bread, uncover and let bread rise before baking. Bake at 350-375°F. For baked bread, reheat in pan or foil at 300°F for 15-20 minutes.	3-6 months
SANDWICHES	Spread slices of bread with butter or margarine. Add filling and spread evenly. Wrap individually or in packages large enough to serve family. Thaw in wrapping.	Sandwiches for grilling, such as cheese or ham salad, should be thawed before grilling in frying pan, oven or on grill.	3-4 weeks
HORS D'OEUVRES	Small meatballs, chicken wings and pastry items. Can be made and frozen for future use. Use directions for freezing meats and pastries.	Thaw, bake in oven until done. Serve immediately.	2-4 weeks
CAKES			
Shortened (Baked)	Prepare and bake as usual in layers or loaf pan. Cool. Remove from pans and wrap tightly. Loaf cake may be cut to family size pieces before wrapping.	Thaw cake in wrapping at room temperature. Ice and serve.	2-4 months
(Unbaked)	Unbaked cakes take more time to thaw and bake than when starting from beginning. There is also a loss of volume. Therefore, use double acting baking powder in mixture and freeze in baking dish.	Thaw in refrigerator. Bake at 350-375°F. Cool. Ice.	2 weeks

Sponge cake, angel and chiffon	Bake thoroughly. Cool. May freeze before wrapping. Place in container that will prevent crushing. Wrap immediately after freezing.	Thaw unfrosted in the refrigerator.	4-6 months
ICINGS	Powdered sugar icings made with fat freeze well. Cooked candy-type frostings may stay soft and creamy between layers, but often crack and crumble on outside of cake.		
COOKIES			
(Baked)	Prepare and bake as stated in recipe. Cool thoroughly. Package in foil or rigid container. Place 2 layers of waxed paper between cookies.	Thaw in containers at room temperature. Remove from containers and serve.	6 months
(Unbaked)	Prepare your favorite cookie dough. Pour in baking pan, or wrap more firm cookie dough in foil or moisture/vapor-resistant material.	Thaw dough in refrigerator. Firm cookie dough may be sliced before completely thawed and baked.	2 weeks
PIES			
(Unbaked, 2-crust)	Prepare as usual. Pies may be frozen and then wrapped, or wrapped and frozen. Pies can be stacked after freezing.	Unwrap. Bake at 425°F for 45 to 50 minutes. Serve hot or cold.	2 months
Chiffon	Prepare as usual. Freeze, then wrap.	Unwrap; thaw in refrigerator from 1 to 2 hours.	1 month
(Baked, 2-crust) Custard Pumpkin	Bake until done. Cool quickly. May use fan. Wrap and freeze.	Unwrap; thaw in refrigerator and serve chilled or reheat in 375°F oven. Thaw custard and pumpkin pies in refrigerator or 325°F oven.	2 months

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